

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. 25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Listener Views on Western
Broadcasts to Bulgaria

REPORT

DATE DISTR. 6 December 1955

NO. OF PAGES 2

REQUIREMENT NO. RD

REFERENCES

25X1

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE

25X1

Voice of America

1. The "Voice of America" broadcasts are widely listened to and generally appreciated in the rural areas of Bulgaria, whereas the more sophisticated urban radio listeners in Sofia, generally prefer the "veteran" BBC services.
2. Radio listeners receive the impression from some of the programs broadcast by VOA, that the United States wants to "show off" its economic superiority (technical, scientific, standard of living, etc.) over the other nations of the world. However, such an attitude of superiority does not win any sympathy or respect for the United States; on the contrary, this type of broadcast merely antagonizes those people who are already genuine friends of the West.
3. The programs which are of the greatest interest to the public are those feature broadcasts in which Bulgarian emigres compare living conditions in the Satellite countries with conditions in the free world. Such programs are often discussed for days. The same is true of the humorous or satirical programs, which are particularly popular in the villages and small towns.
4. The Bulgarian radio audience frowns upon the use of "strong language" in VOA broadcasts and, although the public knows that certain VOA commentators are Bulgarian nationals, the language which they employ in their broadcasts is neither good nor appropriate for their purpose. Frequently, the listener receives the impression that facts have been exaggerated for propaganda purposes, and he must then sift such facts to reach the truth.

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|------|---|------|---|-----|---|-----|--|-----|--|----------|---|
| STATE | X | ARMY | X | NAVY | X | AIR | X | FBI | | AEC | | USTA/TBI | X |
|-------|---|------|---|------|---|-----|---|-----|--|-----|--|----------|---|

(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#".)

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

- 2 -

BBC Broadcasts

5. BBC broadcasts have earned a reputation of impartiality, and generally broadcasts by this service are limited to a recitation of facts. As a result of this dispassionate approach, the BBC has won the confidence of the people to a much greater degree than has VOA. BBC radio reviews on the international political situation are the most popular and frequently provoke discussions of the subject. For example, the BBC commentary in late July 1955, concerning the reasons against Bulgaria's admission into the United Nations, aroused widespread interest and was discussed throughout the following week by every politically conscious person in the area.
6. On the other hand, the BBC does not have any programs similar to the aforementioned humorous-satirical sketches of daily life, broadcast by the Voice of America. Such programs are extremely popular and their content is always assured wide dissemination.

General Commentary on Western Broadcasts

7. The "jamming" of foreign broadcasts is very extensive, but in most cases it is not maintained with the same intensity throughout the entire program. As a result, the chances of successfully receiving the essential parts of the news would be increased considerably if the commentators would repeat the headlines in the middle and at the end of each broadcast.
8. The mention of specific names, places, and dates in connection with everyday events would be very effective in undermining the public's faith in the regime and, at the same time, would serve to enhance the prestige of the West. Neither BBC nor VOA has employed this technique to any great extent; instead, both simply limit themselves to generalities. Another important factor is the lack of both VOA and BBC commentary on serious local problems. For example, as of September 1955, there had not been any mention by VOA or BBC of the fact that there would be widespread dismissals effected throughout the Bulgarian economy as of 1 January 1956. This economy measure is expected to affect more than 40,000 workers and, at present, the matter is being discussed in every home throughout the country and is of serious concern to the entire working population. The foreign radio has also failed to mention the release of certain political prisoners who were, until quite recently, considered to be "public enemies". This official "about-face" could be used to put the regime in an extremely uncomfortable position. Another feature which could be used effectively by VOA or BBC would be the announcement of the real income of a selected local farmer, preferably a member of the Communist Party; in such a broadcast, particular care should be taken to mention the farmer's name and village.
9. General information on life in the West is of no particular interest to the Bulgarian public and broadcasts of this sort should be curtailed, except when known Bulgarian emigres can make legitimate comparisons of living conditions. Radio listeners would prefer the opportunity to view Bulgarian conditions through Western eyes, and the people particularly appreciate those broadcasts which indicate that the truth about their country is known abroad.

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T